

## PIONEERS OF WASATCH COUNTY

Webster defined a pioneer as "one who goes before to prepare the way for those who follow." It is our intention to inscribe for your information some facts concerning some Wasatch County pioneers.

According to records accepted by leading authorities it is fairly certain that as early as 1776, portions of what is now Wasatch County were visited by white men. While George Washington was busy directing revolutionary operations on America's eastern coast, a Spanish expedition actually visited parts of our county. These eight men were Franciscan Friars led by Father Escalante and Father Dominguez.

It was the purpose of the Spaniards to find and mark a safer and easier route from Santa Fe, Mexico, (now New Mexico) to Monterey, California. They followed the Colorado River until they reached Green River. On Sept. 13, 1776, a crossing was made at what is now Jensen, Utah. Here members of the party carved their names on a tree together with the date. This writing is plainly readable today. On Sept. 16, 1776, the party traveled toward Utah Lake. They entered Wasatch County at its boundary following the Strawberry River to the fertile Strawberry Valley. Here they camped and when travel was resumed they crossed over the divide to the south and proceeded down Diamond Fork into Utah Valley.

These Catholic Friars had thus criss-crossed Wasatch County from east to west but had failed to enter or even go by lovely Heber Valley.

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Between the years 1776 and 1825 it is doubtful if any but red-men and wild animals roamed the Provo River Valley. Grass grew tall, birds nestled and beasts grew fat, all in the boundaries of our fair county, waiting to submit to white man's ministrations.

From the journal of Wm. H. Ashley we learn that he and his company of men traveled from a fort on the Uinta River (now in Duchesne Co.) to Fort Hall. They traveled up the Duchesne River to the "West Fork of said river," up the West Fork to Wolf Creek, on up Wolf Creek to the very head of same. They then proceeded down the South Fork of the Provo River.

As they entered the place now known as Kamas Bench or Francis Town, in the distance they saw men. They knew not if they were white or red, friendly or savage. Certainly they were not just common people.

They proved to be the Utah trappers, Jim Bridger, Jedidiah Smith, Provot (for whom the river is named), Jackson, Sublet and others. They had been trapping in the valleys since early spring. This group also by-passed lovely Heber Valley.